When the Indian Constitution ma[illegible] provision in regard to officia[illegible] languages in India, few people outside the charmed circle of Congress leadership realised their full implications. At the outset the draft Constitution only proposed to define wh t language or languages were to be used in the central and St te Legislatures. But in the later stages the champions of the Hindi language succeded in importing into it a number of Articles which are being relentlessly implimented by the Central Government and the Government of the Hindi States.

The people o[illegible] the Southern and Eastern St tes who would be most vitally affected by these changes were lulled into a state of acquiescence by the assurance that for a period of 2x I5 years the English language would continue to be used for Official purposes. Their amour propre was momentasily satisfied by the ostentatives deference paid by the Constitution to their regional languages for certain purposes.

In many unnoticed ways the scales are being weighted against non-Hindi speaking people in the Central administr tion. The appointment of the Official Langu ge Commission and the Majority and Minority Reports of that Commission have awakened us to a sense of the menace of the present trends of policy to the education of our youths and their prospects of honourable employment in the public service and to our rights as equal citizens of the Indian Republic, and in the last resort, to the unity of the country itself.

Elements of discord are already coming to the surface. That the South will never acquiesce in subjugation by the Hindi speaking people needs no elaborate explantion, although there are a few busy bodies among us who outHerm out-Herod the Herods of the North and tell us either to learn and speak an Hindi or be dubbed traitors to the country. The Congress Government and Legislatures of the States see the danger but party discipline prevents their openly opposing any policies of the High Comman even if they were distasteful or even injurious to their

people. Their reactions to the Hindi fanaticism of the North is to work up a fanaticism of their own for their regional languages. Both policies are retrogrnade. Both are instances of obscurantism and intolerance posing as patriotic self respect. Between hysterical expanents of Hindi and those of Regional languages it is common ground that English should bebrought down from its place of ominence in public life and in the educational system. And when the time comes for a showdown it will be a straight fight between the regional language and Hindi, between two sets of linguistic fanatics - without the buffer of the English language. It is not difficult to imagine where all this will lead us.

The lawlessness and bitterness created by he States Reorganisation due to language jealousies and incompatibilities have not yet died down. They should be a warning to all of the friendly gravity of the situation that would arise if there was to be a thorough or sudden change over to Hindi after the expiry of the I5 year period of re rieve.

The Official Language Commission have been at great pains make out that they have laid down no time table for the replacement of English by Hindi as the Official language. They have only pointed out ways and means by which that event could be accelerated. They have observed that "in language policies it is necessary to be fexible as regards time-periods; firm as regards objectives; specific as regards proximate programmes". That is all very well. But what about the Constitution itself? It makes the completely or nearly complete adoption of Hindi as the Official language in I965 imperative with two Commission in I955 and I960 to report on the prog ess made in other words to probe the victim and see how far he is soften ing up.

It took nearly two centuries for the English language to establish itself in India asthe medium of higher education and vehicles political, philosophical and scientific thought. What chance is

thers of Hindi, which is an admittedly undeveloppod and unstandardised language becoming an efficient substitute for English in 15 years? Could this vast change be brought about by the fiat of the State? Assuming that it could be done, what is the sense in doing so? If it involves the open or surreptitious use of compulsion, would it not rouse, has it not roused, resistance? What becomes then of the emotional integration of the country of which we hear so much and which is undoubtedly the need of the hour?

Let there be no mistake — it is not merely a question of changing of the Official language at the Secretariat or Parliament level but of reorientating the entire system of education and various activities in the private sector of national life. The Commission has wisely stated that the linguistic pattern in these sphere "must be allowed freedom to develop by the voluntary choices of the people and in response to the needs and opportunities of the situation".

That is what should be done in respect of the language to be used for official and educational purposes also. You cannot bring about a revolutionary change of language with a stop watch in one hand and a Bradshaw in the other. Amend the Constitution and remove the time limit. Try the voluntary methods and encourage the use of Hindi by propaganda, if you like. And then it may be that by some kind of Gresham's Law, according to which the less valuable medium of currency replaces the more precious, Hindi will become the language of Parliament and the Secretariat, while the use of English would continue unhindered for those purposes for which it is indispensable or better suited than either Hindi or the regional languages. The Legislatures of the States most affected by the change should decide when the country is ripe for it and when it should be formally declared.

This morning's papers contain heartening news. The Prime Minister is reported to have conveyed to the Congress Parliamentary party his distress at the growing excitement" in the matter of the national language and to have impressed on them that the question ought to be approached in such a way as to find an agreed solution which alone

would remove the fears and apprehensions in the minds of "the non-Hindi speaking people". "Hindi" he pointed out "was being learnt voluntarily in non-Hindi areas. This shouldbe encouraged and no pressure should be used". People here cannot be sufficiently grateful to the Prime Minister for his statesmanlike approach to this question and it is to be hoped that other leaders will adopt the same attitude.